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Shaking SALT

The Soviets are frustrating U.S. surveillance efforts by coding the data that their new submarine-launched Typhoon missile sends back to earth during test shots. The coding—or “encryption”—could prevent the

United States from determining whether the new missile carries more than the fourteen warheads and decoys permitted by the SALT II agreement. American experts say there has been no treaty violation yet because early Typhoon tests have misfired soon after launch. If the same pattern of encryption is used in longer flights, however, it would violate SALT II, which bans coding that might prevent verification. Since the treaty has not been ratified by the U.S. Senate, SALT II is just a gentleman's agreement; if the Soviets violate it, the Reagan Administration may, too.